

ACE (Peer) Suicide Intervention

James P. Cartwright, PhD
(James.cartwright@us.army
.mil)



**“Shoulder-To-Shoulder:
No Soldier Stands**



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Complete the Pre Measurement

**Send Questionnaires :
James W. Cartwright, PhD
5158 Blackhawk Rd
APG, MD 21010-5403
James.cartwright@us.army.mil**



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

**Sergeant Major
of the Army
states:**

*"One suicide is
one too many!"*

*"Not all wounds are visible. If
you are feeling depressed or
suicidal, seek help. We need
you on the Army team."*

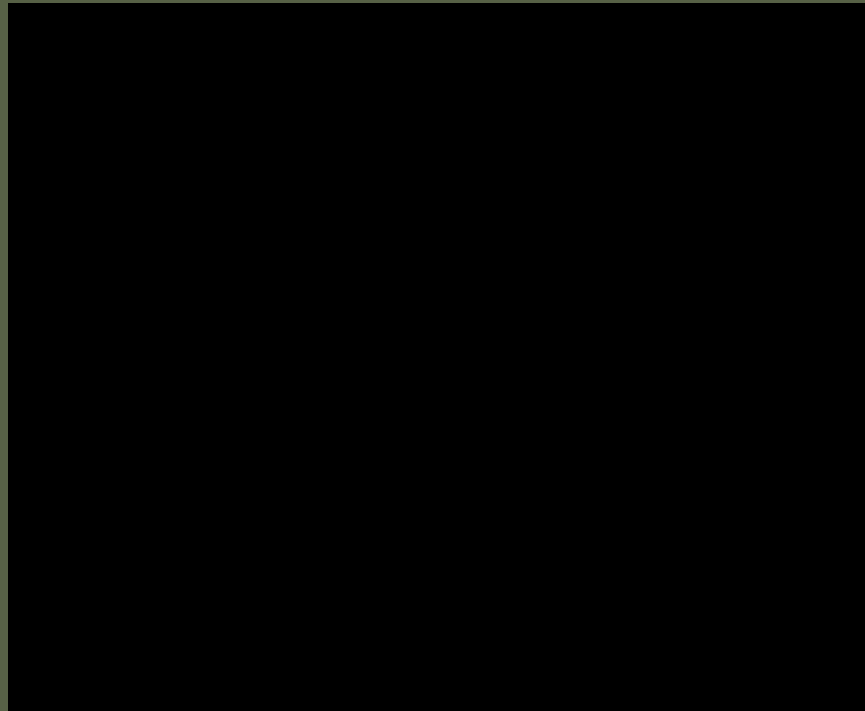
SMA Kenneth O. Preston



U.S. ARMY



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine



U.S. ARMY



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

“ACE”

“A” = “Ask”

“C” = “Care”

“E” = “Escort”



U.S. ARMY



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

What Does “ACE” Training Offer?

- **“ACE”** teaches Soldiers how to recognize suicidal behavior in fellow Soldiers and the warning signs that accompany it
- **“ACE”** targets those Soldiers most at risk for suicide and the least likely to seek help due to stigma
- **“ACE”** increases a Soldier’s confidence to ask if a battle buddy is thinking of suicide



What Does “ACE” Training Offer?

continued

- “ACE” teaches Soldiers skills in active listening
- “ACE” encourages Soldiers to take a battle buddy directly to the Chain of Command, Chaplain or behavioral health provider, i.e., never leave a battle buddy alone!!!



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Bottom Line

- Soldiers know each other best
- Soldiers can become a competent and confident force for preservation of life within the integrity of the unit
- Enables soldiers to become more effective at helping a battle buddy who may be at risk

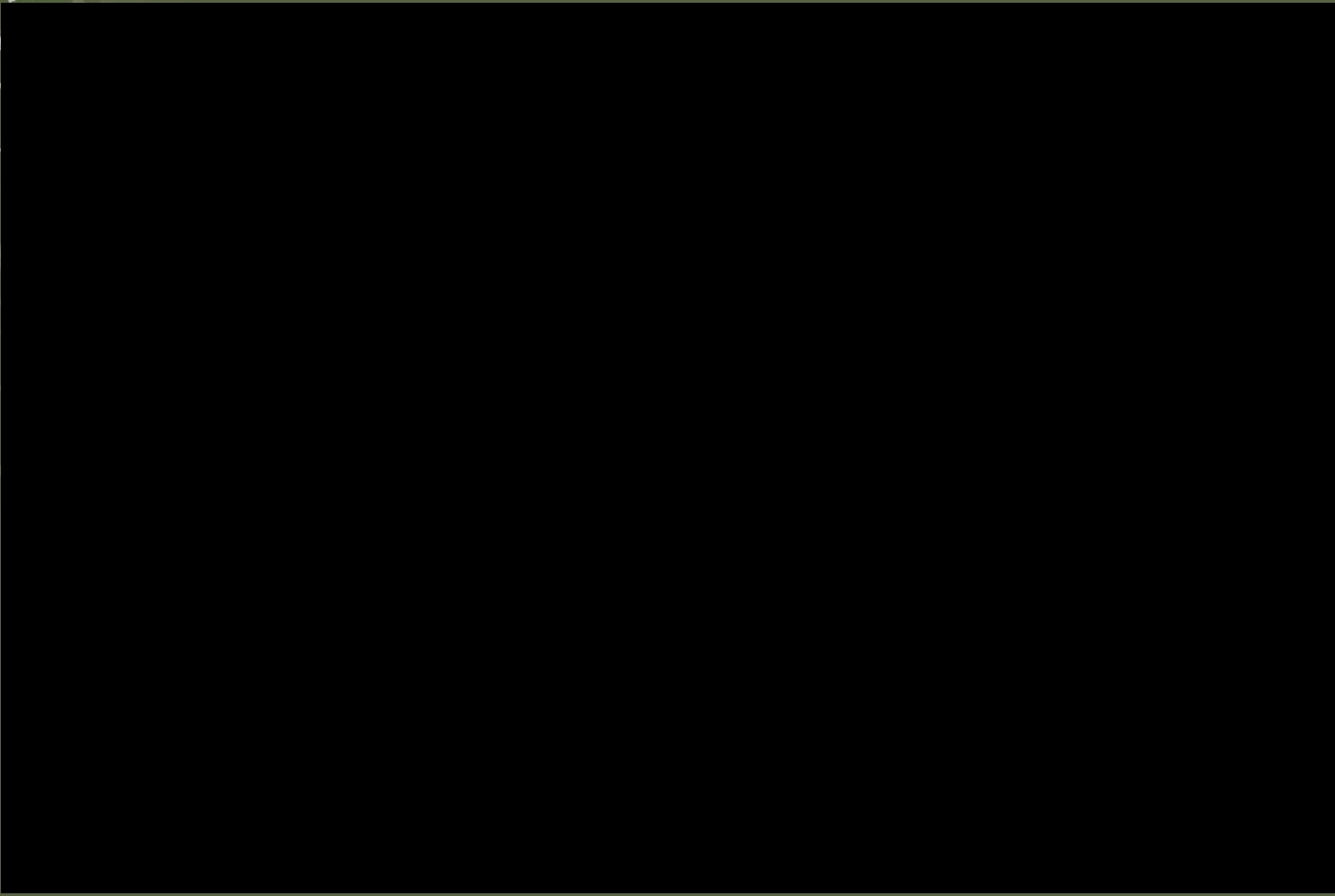


Attitude Awareness

Attitude is
everything...
Lesson One



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Protective Factors/Resiliency



Lesson Two: Protective factors “enhance resilience and may serve to counter balance risk factors”.



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Protective Factors

Individual Protective Factors

1. Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support self-preservation
2. Coping/problem solving
3. Support through ongoing health and mental health care relationships



Protective Factors

continued

Individual Protective Factors (continued)

4. Resiliency, self esteem, direction, mission, determination, dedication, optimism, empathy support through ongoing health and mental health care relationships
5. Support through the Unit Chaplain or Unit Ministry Team



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Protective Factors

continued

Individual Protective Factors (continued)

5. Reasons for living
6. Family supports (spouse & extended family)
7. Pride and patriotism
8. Skills to recognize and respond to signs of risk



U.S. ARMY



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Protective Factors

continued

Unit Protective Factors

1. Unit cohesion
2. Sense of social support and belonging in the unit
3. Staying connected with friends – Buddy system
4. Cultural values affirming life
5. Caring Leadership



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Protective Factors

continued

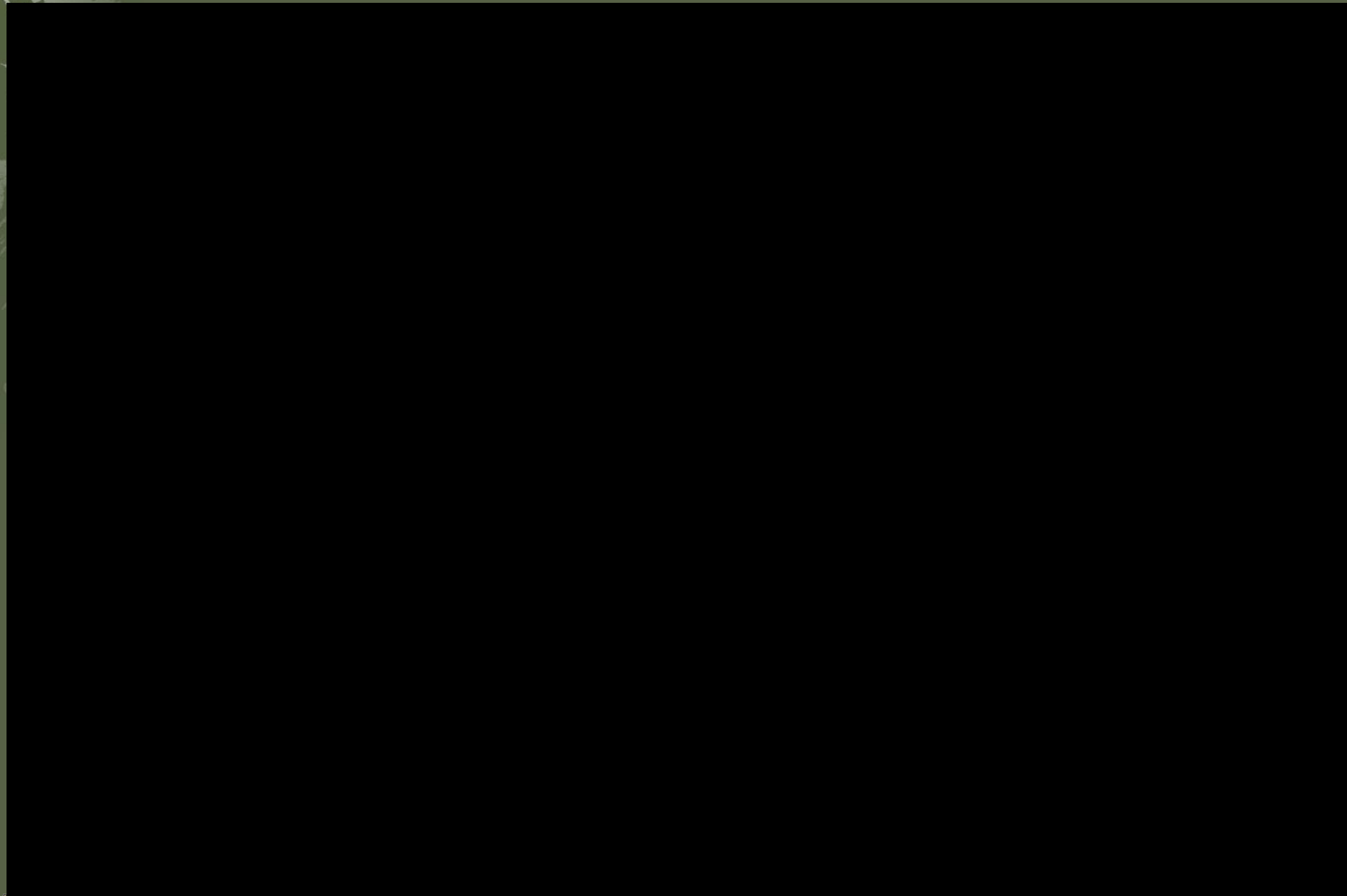
Military Community Protective factors

1. Access to healthcare and mental health care
2. Social support, close relationships, caring adults, participation and bond with school and church
3. Respect for help-seeking behavior



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Drew Carey Stays Positive



U.S. ARMY



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Resiliency

- Resiliency is the ability to recover and adapt well from the face of adversity, trauma, illness, changes or misfortunes
- Soldier resiliency includes the following:
 - ✓ sense of belonging in the unit
 - ✓ Inner strength to face adversity and fears of combat



Resiliency

continued

- ✓ Capacity to connect with buddies
- ✓ Maintaining caring and supportive relationship within and outside the family,
- ✓ Positive view of self
- ✓ Confidence in strengths and abilities to function as a Soldier
- ✓ Capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Strategies for Building Resiliency

- Building resiliency is a personal journey
- Meet the challenge of building resiliency by:
 - ✓ Make connections and reach out to unit members
 - ✓ Actively engage in developing good relationships with fellow Soldiers



Strategies for Building Resiliency

continued

- ✓ Be active in unit activities
- ✓ Join base social support groups, faith-based organizations, or other groups
- ✓ Accept and face your fears
- ✓ Nurture good relationships with family and close friends



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Strategies for Building Resiliency

continued

- ✓ Accept the help and support from them when you need someone who cares and willing to listen
- ✓ Regulate your emotions and avoid impulsive behavior. Learn to stay calm under pressure
- ✓ Maintain realistic optimism. Believe in your ability to survive and function as a good Soldier



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Strategies for Building Resiliency

continued

- ✓ Problem solve and worked toward positive outcomes.
- ✓ Commitment to physical health.
- ✓ Faith in God and the future – being connected



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

ACE Skill Development Three



Ask your buddy

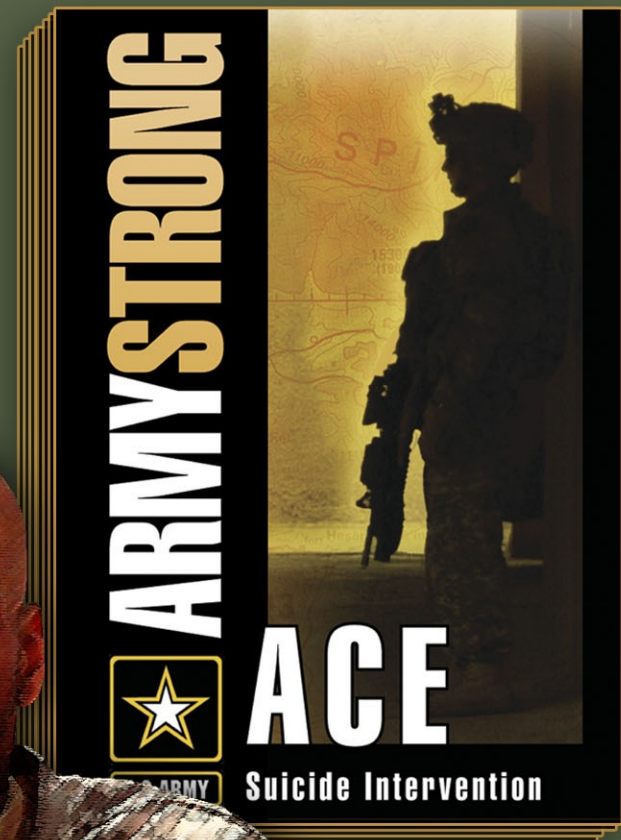
- Have the courage to ask the question, but stay calm
- Ask the question directly, e.g. Are you thinking of killing yourself?

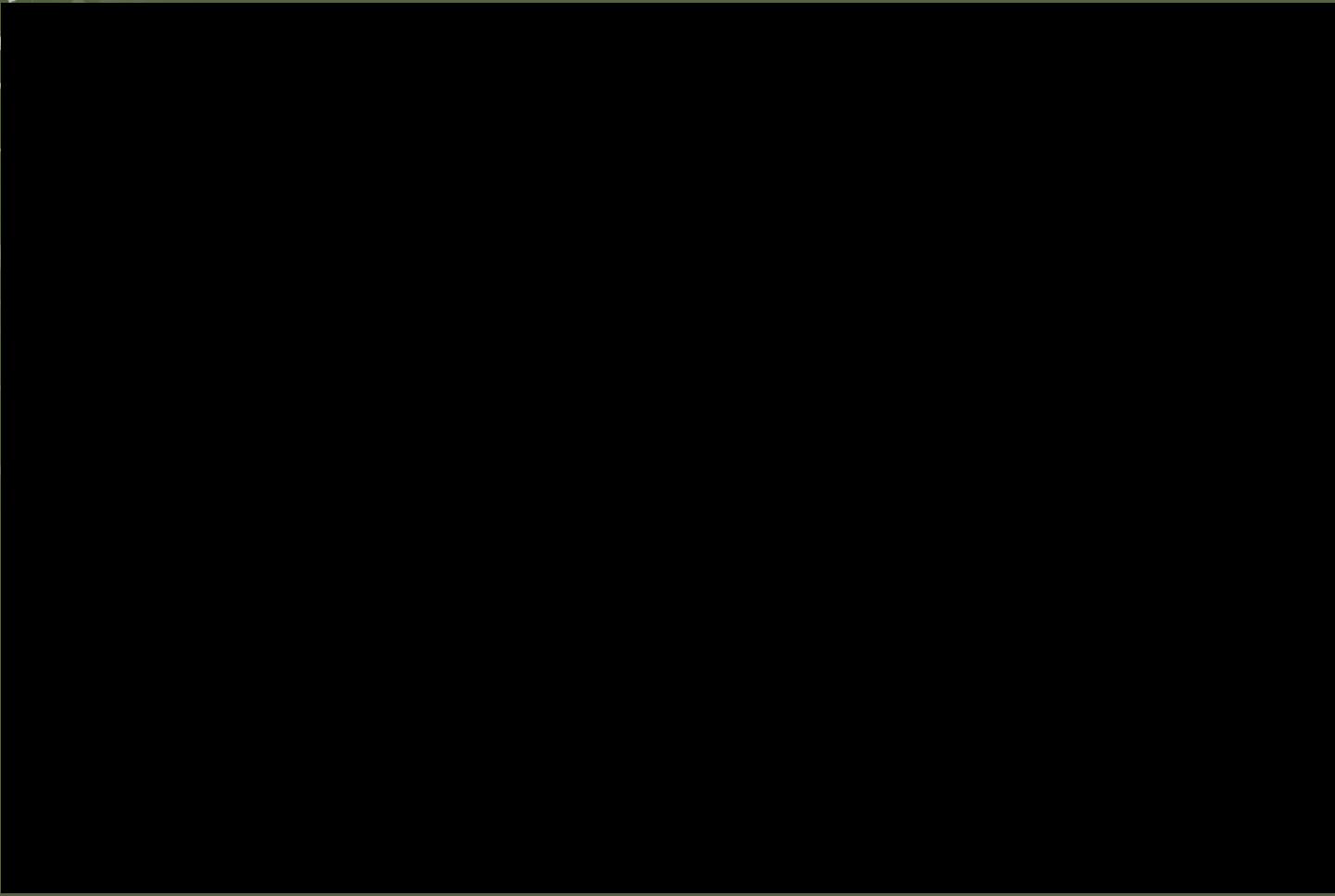
Care for your buddy

- Remove any means that could be used for self-injury
- Calmly control the situation; do not use force
- Actively listen to produce relief

Escort your buddy

- Never leave your buddy alone
- Escort to the chain of command, a Chaplain, a behavioral health professional, or a primary care provider





U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

What is “ACE”?

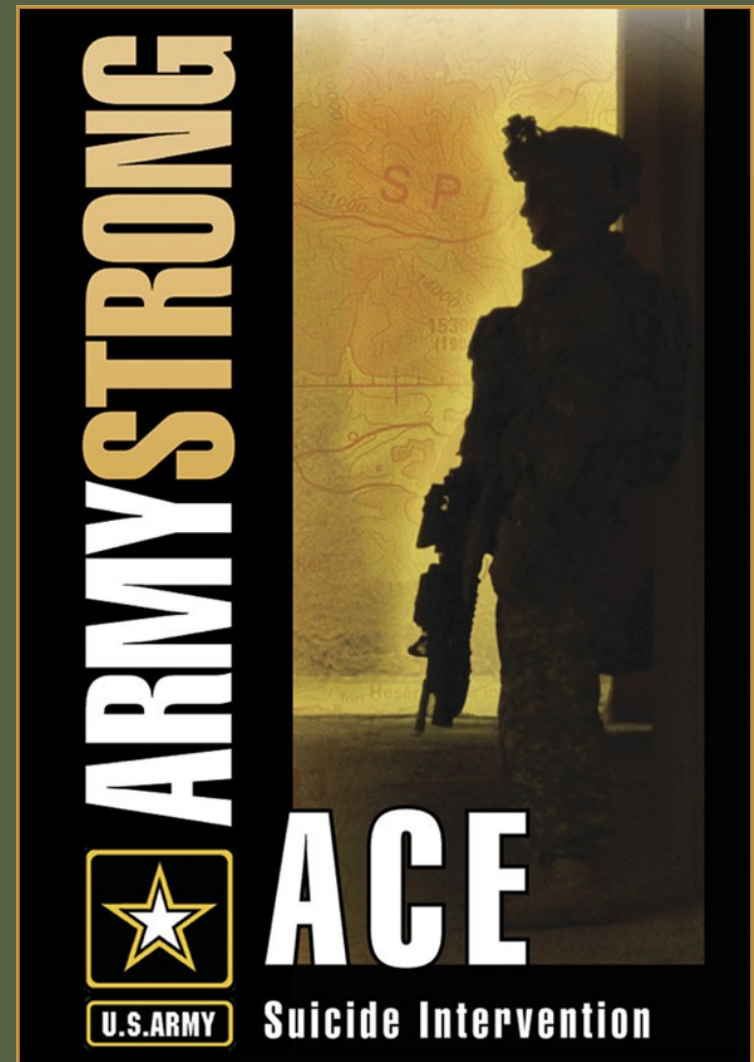
“**A**” = “Ask”

“**C**” =

“Care”

“**E**” =

“Escort”



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

ACE for Soldiers: “Ask”

- **Ask** your battle buddy about his or her suicidal thoughts
- Know the warning signs you might see in yourself or battle buddy if he or she is suicidal. Look for any outward sign that shows a deviation from your battle buddy’s usual self
- When the warning signs are present, it is imperative to ask your battle buddy directly; “Are you thinking about killing yourself”?



ACE for Soldiers: “Ask”

(continued)

Ask your battle buddy directly about thoughts or plans for suicide

1. Say something like, “I can see that you feel distressed.” “Have you thought of hurting yourself or someone else?” or, “Do you wish you were dead?”
2. Then “Have you thought of how you could kill yourself?”



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

ACE for Soldiers: “Ask”

(continued)

Ask your battle buddy directly about thoughts or plans for suicide

3. Talk openly about suicide. Be willing to listen and allow your battle buddy to express his or her feelings



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

ACE for Soldiers: “Care”

- **Care** for your battle buddy by understanding that your battle buddy may be in pain. Active listening may produce relief. Calmly control the situation: do not use force. Take action by removing any lethal means, such as weapons or pills
- Important to understand with what, where, and when the battle buddy plans to kill himself or herself. The fact your battle buddy acknowledges his or her plans generally suggests that they are accepting help



ACE for Soldiers: “Care”

(continued)

- If your battle buddy tells you his plan, try to determine what steps he or she planned to take in order to carry out the event
- What were his or her preparations for dying (e.g., giving away personal possessions)?
- Find out the timing and location of the suicidal plan and the lethality of method
- Ask about rehearsal behaviors (e.g., tying noose, loading gun)



ACE for Soldiers: “Care”

(continued)

- Explore ambivalence; ask your battle buddy, specifically, about his reasons to die versus the reasons to live
- Determine your battle buddy’s access to lethal methods, including firearms
- Disarm your battle buddy (lethal means). If your battle buddy is armed, say, “Let me unload your weapon and keep it safe for you while we talk”



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

ACE for Soldiers: “Care”

(continued)

Now it is time to take your battle buddy for help.

1. Talking to your battle buddy
2. Encouraging your battle buddy to see a helping professional, now
3. Identifying support systems that can help your battle buddy



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

ACE for Soldiers: “Escort”

- **E**scort your battle buddy immediately to your chain of command, Chaplain, or behavioral health profession
- Don't keep your battle buddy's suicidal behavior a secret. Adopting an attitude that you are going to help your battle buddy will save his or her life
- Stay with your buddy until he or she receives appropriate help. Don't leave your battle buddy alone
- Being there for your battle buddy will make the difference



ACE for Soldiers: “Escort”

(continued)

- Be available and supportive
- Reassure your battle buddy that you will be by his or her side no matter what
- Locate help for your battle buddy. Know where to get professional help from resources in the military and civilian community
- Whatever you do, be sure to secure help and support for your battle buddy



Active Listening

- Look your battle buddy in the eyes; suspend other things you are doing
- Listen not merely to the words, but the feeling content
- Be sincerely interested in what your battle buddy is talking about
- Talk to your battle buddy alone in a private setting



Active Listening

(continued)

- Allow your battle buddy to talk freely
- Restate what your battle buddy said
- Ask clarification questions once in a while
- Be aware of your own feelings and strong opinion
- Don' feel compelled to fill in the silence



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Active Listening

(continued)

- When talking to your battle buddy, give him and yourself plenty of time
- Stay calm and objective
- Don't criticize or argue with your battle buddy's thoughts and feelings, but listen and allow time for him/her to find words
- Have your resources handy (i.e., know how to locate your chain of command, chaplain, or behavioral health)



Role Play

Don't feel bad! Role play is sometimes uncomfortable. This is a normal reaction.

Lesson Four



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Role Play

It is every Soldier's responsibility to look out for his or her battle buddy which includes helping a battle buddy during times of trouble. For the **next hour**, you will have the opportunity to practice what you have been taught thus far about the **"ACE"** intervention. Don't feel bad if role-playing feels uncomfortable. This is a common reaction.



Role Play

continued

Remember, you are “Army Strong” and your ability to face your fears of being embarrassed during the role play will require you to use your inner strength and moral courage to help get through the process



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Role Play Ground Rules

- No fault
- Learn by watching and doing
- Feel free to use the ACE and Training Tip cards
- Each will get a chance to play one role or other
- Break into groups of three and take a few minutes to decide who plays what
- Don't do worst case scenarios; don't play something too personal
- Make it doable



Role Play Activities

The Person at Risk Role:

- You can either follow one of the scripts provided or make up a script (think about Soldier/ buddy situations).
- Brief your helper initially by providing background information about your role, remember this person already knows you.
- Don't do worst case scenarios; assist your helper through the ACE process.
- Time-out when necessary to assist the helper.

The Helper's Role:

- Identify who you will be i.e., buddy, First Sgt, colleague, commander, etc.
- Try using the ACE model to help the person at risk or examine the match with the model afterwards.
- Feel free to use your prompter cards (ACE card and Warning tip card).
- Time -out when necessary to get help from others.

The Observer's Role:

- Observe the interaction.
- Provide assistance to the helper as needed.
- Be prepared to provide observations and feedback.



U.S.ARMY



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Resource Development Exercise

Lesson Five



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Resources

The following are generally available either in garrison or in all tactical environments:

A. In Garrison:

1. Unit Chaplain; Unit Ministry Teams
2. Family Life Chaplains
3. Army Community Services
4. Medical Services (Behavioral Health or Primary Care)
5. Marriage and Family Counselors
6. Post Deployment Centers



Resources

(continued)

The following are generally available either in garrison or in all tactical environments:

B. During Deployment:

1. Combat Stress Control Teams
2. Medics
3. Battalion Aid Station
4. Chaplain & Unit Ministry Teams



U.S. ARMY



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Resources (continued)

All Soldiers/ Family members can contact the

Military One Source for free confidential help

@ <https://www.militaryonesource.com>



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Summary

1. The Goals of “ACE” Training
2. Army Suicide Prevention Program (ASPP)
3. Key Elements of This Training
4. What is “ACE”?
5. “ACE” For Soldiers: “Ask”



Summary

continued

6. “ACE” For Soldiers: “Care”
7. “ACE” For Soldiers: “Escort”
8. Role Play
9. Resources



Complete Suicide Prevention Post Questionnaire (Attachment 1)

Complete Army's Ace Suicide intervention Training Feedback



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine

Questions?

Thank You
for
Getting
involved!



U.S. Army Center for Health Promotion & Preventive Medicine